

**Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing February 15, 2016**

**Testimony of Evan Woodford
UConn School of Dental Medicine, 2nd Year Student**

Re: UConn Health Budget

Co-Chairs, Ranking Member, and members of the Committee, thank you for the chance to speak with you today. My name is Evan Woodford, and I am a second year Dental student at UConn. I am a lifelong resident of Westbrook, Connecticut, and both of my parents are graduates of the UConn School of Dental Medicine.

UConn Health is a source of pride for Connecticut, a demonstration of our state's commitment to cutting edge, affordable health care for our residents and the development of our future generations of medical and dental professionals. It is the investments made by this committee that have allowed this to be possible, and I thank you all for the opportunity to be a member of that future generation.

That future, one that sees Connecticut consistently place its dental graduates into their choice of post-graduate residency programs, would be put in jeopardy by large budget cuts. There were many reasons I chose to come to UConn, and I will touch on a few of those briefly. In 2015, I recall driving to the UConn Health campus in order to speak with the dean of admissions, and immediately being struck by the scope of the ongoing construction. Seeing the new buildings made me determined to achieve a position in its class. I saw something new being built, a new chapter in dental education, and I felt safe with the knowledge that my experiences would be protected by a government that understood the value that a place like UConn Health could provide. If the state was willing to invest so much into the infrastructure, I felt that it also demonstrated a commitment to providing its students with the very best dental education possible.

I worry what message will be sent to future students if that vital support needed to continue to provide their educations in those buildings is withdrawn. I worry that it might seem like an empty gesture, if the lack of funds limits the ability to provide the best education possible in those brand new facilities. If we do not continue to invest in UConn Health, how are we to know whether prospective students will make the decision I did, to stay in Connecticut and attend the School of Dental Medicine?

Another reason I chose UConn was because I wanted to be able to share a common tie with the majority of dental providers in the state. UConn School of Dental Medicine is the only dental school in the State. Approximately 50% of practicing dentists here share some connection to the UConn School of Dental Medicine. For many dentists, UConn is a unifying bond. I believe it is an important source of networking for our future dentists, especially those who plan on practicing in Connecticut such as myself and many of my classmates. We are fortunate here in the state to have a dental school that keeps our brightest students local. In order to maintain that high caliber of affordable education that attracts these students – and supplies the next generation of Connecticut dentists – the funding to UConn Health needs

to be maintained. If our students instead choose to look outside the state for their educations, then that important network of dentists is significantly impaired. If we want the best medical and dental care for our citizens, we need to continue to attract the best students and retain them in Connecticut.

I would like to conclude by thanking you all for the opportunity to speak with you this evening. Your support of UConn up to this point has been crucial and is very much appreciated; it is a support that my fellow students and I would like to see continued. I urge you to minimize the amount of the proposed budget cuts in order to maintain our excellent progress.